

School Committee Meeting Minutes  
Shirley Middle School  
May 11, 2004

Present: Donald Parker, Chairperson  
Gary Bourassa  
Hugh Muffoletto  
Paul Wilson  
Bob Prescott

Also Present: Dr. Thomas Scott, Superintendent  
Patricia Stern, Business Manager  
Sylvia Jordan, Middle School Principal  
Suzanne Mahoney, Elementary Principal  
Lonnie Ouellette, Early Learning Director  
Thomas Walsh, SPED Director  
Mike Smith, FinCom  
Joe Deguglielmo, DEAC

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m.

Public Participation:

As there was none, the committee moved forward to discuss Business Affairs.

Business Affairs:

Patricia Stern reviewed the Financial Statement. Mrs. Stern explained that once all revenue streams that we anticipate receiving have been utilized there will be a balance of \$132,000. These revenue sources include Medicaid, Circuit Breaker, local appropriation, state aide, school choice and Devens. Mrs. Stern also pointed out that the transportation budget is running at a \$129,000 deficit, thereby washing out the revenue balance. She stated that there could possibly be additional funding from Circuit Breaker as the numbers used were very conservative figures. Additionally, the school might be able to transfer some qualifying expenditures out of the revenue sources into grant funds. Mr. Swanton, FinCom, has suggested that the school district submit for a Reserve Fund Transfer for the \$10,000 used to repair the Center School boiler. Mrs. Stern stated that Mr. Walsh is currently working with our transportation vendor, which could result in additional SPED transportation adjustments. Her final comment on the financial statement is that it looks like there will not be any carryover funds available for FY05 that we have enjoyed in the last few years.

Old Business:

Mrs. Stern began her discussion of the FY05 budget by reminding the committee members of the original Needs-Based Budget of \$7,585,958. She then subtracted those

cuts that she is reasonably certain will take place. These include: (1) Level 1 personnel cuts; (2) supply cuts; (3) reduced SPED out of district placements; (4) anticipated \$25,000 reduction in public high school tuition. She also factored in the Department of Public Health Grant of \$17,000, as well as \$18,000 additional revenue from Grant 240 that the Business Office recently learned the school would receive. These factors bring the Needs-Based Budget to \$6.6 million. In terms of revenue, the school will assume level funding from the town of \$1.4 million, Chapter 70 level funding at \$3.9 million, school choice revenue of \$500,000, Devens income of \$420,000, and Medicaid at \$60,000. This brings the total revenue to \$6.3 million. Given these figures, Mrs. Stern has stated that an override would be needed for \$309,000.

If we are unsuccessful in receiving the override, Dr. Scott has come up with a list of items for consideration to reduce the budget even further. These items are as follows:

- 3% wage adjustment for non-contractual staff. This would eliminate the additional step increase normally received by these employees, resulting in a savings of \$38,000.
- Reduce extraordinary maintenance to \$10,000, a savings of \$20,000.
- Reduce general supply bid order to \$20,000, a savings of \$10,000.
- Reduce recess aides, a savings of \$3600.
- Reduce all teacher aides, except one-on-one aides, resulting in a savings of \$87,000.
- Reduce specialists, a savings of \$87,000.
- Eliminate 2 technology assistants, a savings of \$31,000.
- Eliminate one Grade 4 teacher, a savings of \$38,000.
- There is the chance that one out-of-district SPED student will return to the district next year, saving \$30,000. If this happens, the Grade 4 teacher position could be saved.

Mr. Muffoletto questioned why wage freezes have not been considered in an effort to save programs. He asked Mrs. Stern what that savings would be. Mrs. Stern responded that it would be a savings of \$80,256. Mr. Prescott stated that he would like to see the \$86,000 in SPED contractual services be listed on a separate line item. By doing so, Mr. Wilson stated that it would be the town's responsibility to find out where the money should come from to pay for it. Mr. Prescott motioned that the SPED portion of account 9100 and the entire 9300 and 9400 accounts be separated into a line item on the Town Warrant. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion. One member opposed the motion. Motion was approved.

When looking at the transportation budget for FY04, the total cost is \$473,163. The same budget for FY05 is \$603,000, of which \$325,000 is for SPED related charges. If SPED transportation is taken out of the budget, Dr. Scott stated that there would not be a need to charge the bus user fees approved at the last school committee meeting. A question was raised by a member as to why the entire town does not absorb the high SPED costs for transportation. Mr. Wilson stated that now that the SPED monies are to be listed as separate line items it is important that we do not reinstate programs that we would have

lost while paying for SPED. The purpose of the separate line item is to show the town what is going on with the school and where the money is spent.

As a result of the committee's approval of the line item, Mr. Wilson motioned to accept the new estimated budget of \$5,780,416 exclusive of transportation and out of district SPED costs. Mr. Prescott seconded the motion. Motion was approved. This new estimated budget amount would require an override of \$223,000. Discussions were now heard as to how to lower this amount further. Mr. Muffoletto stated that, theoretically, the school district could go to 3 teachers per grade, except Grade 5, with 25 students per class. He would also like to see a wage freeze, a savings of \$80,256, in an effort to save programs. Mr. Muffoletto would also like to see the Teachers Union address a wage freeze as well. Mr. Wilson, after participating in the teacher's contract negotiation process in 2002, does not feel that the teachers should alter their contracts. Mr. Prescott motioned to approve a 3% wage increase for non-contractual employees. No step increase will occur. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion. Motion was approved, resulting in a savings of \$38,070.

At 8:30 p.m. Senator Resor and Representative Eldridge were introduced to the committee members and audience. Senator Resor stated that the Circuit Breaker will be funded at 60%. She also informed the members that the School Building Assistance Program will, within 3 years, cover all communities on the list. There are currently over 400 communities waiting for assistance, with Shirley in the top third on the list. Overall, Senator Resor feels that this is much improved news over last year at this time. Representative Eldridge stated that a special commission has been formed to look at the funding of Charter Schools. It appears that more money will come from the state to fund these schools than from local taxation. Dr. Scott stated that the Department of Revenue sent out a local aid proposal regarding tuition reimbursement of \$104,000. Dr. Scott informed the committee that this money goes to the town's general fund, not the school budget.

After addressing the School Committee, Senator Resor and Representative Eldridge thanked everyone and left the meeting. The members then moved forward to discuss the Devens School. Mr. Bourassa was concerned about the duplication of services at Devens. He again commented that the committee is looking at closing the facility, not cutting the programs. Dr. Scott stated that he does not recommend closing Devens. Mrs. Ouellette stated that if Devens should close, the district stands to lose \$84,000 in grant funding which pays for kindergarten teachers and portions of 2 SPED teacher salaries. The accreditation would likely not occur as the process began with the Devens environment a crucial part of the program. Mr. Bourassa motioned to consolidate the Early Learning Program into existing district spaces, excluding Devens. One member agreed with the motion. The remaining four members voted no. Motion to close Devens was denied.

The members moved forward to review the extraordinary maintenance account. Previously it voted on that the account would be cut from \$30,000 to \$10,000. A motion

was made by Mr. Bourassa to maintain \$15,000 in extraordinary maintenance. The motion was seconded and approved.

As a result of the voted 3% salary increases for all non-contractual employees with no step increase and the voted \$15,000 in extraordinary maintenance, the new adjusted needs based budget is now \$5,727,346. A motion was made by Mr. Bourassa to amend the original figure presented tonight (\$5,780,416) to this new figure. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion. The motion was approved. Mr. Prescott motioned to separate out-of-district SPED costs as separate line items along with the out-of-district costs previously approved tonight. Additionally, he motioned that the fee structure for transportation bus fees be suspended. Mr. Bourassa seconded the motion. Motion was approved.

The committee moved forward to review the minutes of the March 23, 2004 and March 29, 2004 school committee meetings. A motion was made to accept both. Motion was seconded and approved.

Mrs. Stern reviewed Payroll warrants 800, 843 and 343. She also reviewed Payables warrants 447 and 449 (dated 5/19/04).

#### New Business:

Dr. Scott informed the committee that the Middle School Council would like to sell bricks as a fundraiser. The proposal was tabled until a plan could be presented as to where the bricks would be located.

#### Correspondence:

Dr. Scott reviewed the following correspondence:

- Letter from Administrative Assistants at SMS regarding the impact of staff reduction in that position
- DEAC meeting on May 12 - Dr. Scott and Mr. Muffolletto will attend the roundtable discussion with local superintendents and school committee members.
- "Free Cash"
- Local aid proposal
- School web site would like biography information on committee members
- Fine Lines, a collection of writing from the LAW students

The next meeting will be held on May 25, 2004 at 7p.m at Shirley Middle School. The committee will elect its officers. Meeting was adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:  
Karen Gutheil

